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How New Study of Soviet Arms Affects Carter

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By one decision of potentially far reaching economic implications and another of major significance for the Washington political scene, the Ford administration has insured that defense will be one of the most discussed problems of the Carter administration.

U.S. defense requirements in relation to the Soviet Union have always been controversial. They have been argued between those who have warned of a growing Soviet military threat requiring more expensive American defense efforts and those who have contended that the danger is overdrawn to justify larger spending than necessary.

The terms of this controversy have now been sharply shifted by a new estimate of Soviet military developments from the U.S. government intelligence community. It strongly supports the warnings.

The annual estimate of Soviet military intentions finds that the Kremlin is seeking to attain superiority over U.S. military forces, according to information obtained by the New York Times and published by The Star yesterday.

This revised the previously confident assumptions by the U.S. intelligence community as a whole — despite strong dissensions — that there was not an arms race under way on the Soviet side of the superpower balance. The revision raises the question of whether U.S. economic priorities should be realigned to provide greater military strength for this country.

THE IMPLICATION that Congress should be more receptive to large Pentagon spending proposals aroused immediate comment on Capitol Hill. Congressional aides were quoted yesterday as seeing in the news an effort to influence the annual battle over the military budget.

This reaction touched on the importance of both the decision to revise the intelligence estimate, with its budgetary implications, and the decision to publicize the revision, affecting the political discussion of defense.

George Bush, who is both director of the CIA and head of the whole intelligence community, including the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the New York Times that new evidence and a reinterpretation of old information contributed to the reassessment of Soviet intentions.

Normally, the CIA director does not give interviews on national intelligence estimates. Even when reporters learn something about decisions within the intelligence community, CIA directors usually will not talk about them, refusing to confirm or deny them or to provide additional information to put them into perspective.

The government has often approached the New York Times to publicize things that it is reluctant to announce directly. Recent articles have recalled that Soviet Leader Nikita S. Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech" was handed to the New York Times for publication, complete with CIA footnotes, without public explanation of the agency's involvement.

WHETHER BUSH SIMPLY agreed to talk about the new intelligence estimate when asked, or the Ford administration approached the New York Times to publicize it, the effect of giv-

ing the information an official stamp was the same. It guaranteed that the revision in evaluating the Soviet challenge would become known with an authoritative ring which will profoundly affect the future defense dialogue in Washington.

By finding that the Soviet Union is seeking superiority, the new estimate finally abandons the assumption made by the government during the 1950s that the Kremlin would view superpower relations in the same rational way that this country did — seeing the wasteful futility of trying to win a race to accumulate unusable weaponry and therefore settling for military parity.

Some experts on Soviet affairs, both civilian and in the armed forces, have never accepted that old assumption.

It has always been possible to find writings in Soviet military journals which support an interpretation that the Kremlin is determined to control the world's strongest military machine and use it to spread the Soviet form of communism. When such quotations have been used in U.S. arguments over the military threat, however, critics have tended to dismiss them as outmoded Marxism mouthed ritualistically without significance.

A SUCCESSION OF civilians has gone to work at the Pentagon and become believers in a dangerous Soviet threat which requires a greater U.S. military effort. But others have argued that such people were brainwashed by the professional soldiers, who simply wanted to justify more weapons.

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